



COMMISSION ON THE PREVENTION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION PROLIFERATION AND TERRORISM

For Immediate Release

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WMD Panel Releases Report to Congress: World at Risk Nuclear and Biological Weapons Pose Greatest Peril

WASHINGTON, December 2, 2008 – A congressionally appointed commission is calling on the President-elect and the next Congress to immediately initiate several concrete actions, unilaterally and with the international community, to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that pose the greatest peril: nuclear and biological weapons.

The Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism released its report, “World at Risk” today, and is briefing Vice President-elect Biden, President Bush and congressional leaders.

“Ours remains a world at risk and our margin of safety is shrinking, not growing. The Commission believes that unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is likely that a weapon of mass destruction will be used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013,” said former Sen. Bob Graham, the Commission chairman. Graham said the Commission reached this sobering conclusion following six months of deliberations, site visits and interviews with more than 250 government officials and nongovernmental experts in the United States and abroad.

"The report covers a lot of important ground but probably the most important is its assessment: the risk is growing, not because we're making no progress but because the enemy is adapting and we must constantly anticipate and adapt as well across a broad front," former U.S. Sen. Jim Talent, the Commission's vice chairman said.

The Commission centered its findings on several areas where it determined the risks to the United States are increasing: the crossroads of terrorism and proliferation in the poorly governed parts of Pakistan, the prevention of biological and nuclear terrorism, and the potential erosion of international nuclear security, treaties and norms as we enter a nuclear energy renaissance.

The WMD report also details concrete recommendations to ensure a more efficient and effective domestic policy coordination structure, oversight reform and enhanced cooperation among appropriate law-enforcement and counterterrorism communities. Recommendations for the principal concerns include:

- 1) **Radically revamp our strategic policy on Pakistan. Conditions in that country pose a serious challenge to America's short-term and medium-term national security interests.**

Our recommendation is clear: we must work with Pakistan and other countries in the region to eliminate terrorist safe havens through military, economic and diplomatic

means; secure nuclear and biological materials in Pakistan, counter and defeat extremist ideology; and constrain a nascent nuclear arms race in Asia.

- 2) **Develop a new blueprint to prevent biological weapons proliferation and bioterrorism.** Terrorists are more likely to unleash an aerosol can filled with pathogens than to strike with a nuclear weapon. We must assess our domestic program to secure and identify the origins of dangerous pathogens; tighten oversight of our high-containment laboratories; and improve our rapid response to prevent biological attacks from inflicting mass casualties. On the global stage, we can take the lead in cultivating global measures to develop an action plan for universal adherence to and compliance with the anemic 36-year-old Biological Weapons Convention.

- 3) **Reinvigorate the nuclear non-proliferation agenda. Nuclear terrorism is still a preventable catastrophe and it is our duty to stop nuclear trafficking and reaffirm the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.** We must set strong penalties for violators who withdraw from the protective constraints of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency with more authority and resources. We must develop and employ further counter-proliferation efforts, and work with Russia to secure its nuclear materials and forge a global consensus for a nuclear fuel bank.

“Our near miss during the course of our fieldwork for this report served as a reminder of the urgency of our mission and message. Members of our Commission were en route to Islamabad when a horrific bomb blast destroyed the Islamabad Marriott Hotel, where we were to stay just hours later. More than fifty people died in that terrorist attack,” Graham said. “Ours remains a world at risk, but we are convinced that adopting our recommendations will enhance our safety and that of the world.”

The report called for a new emphasis on open and honest engagement between government and citizens in safeguarding the United States, with better methods of distributing knowledge about potential terrorist attacks, coordinated public response mechanisms and improved networks of communications.

Established by House Resolution 1 to implement a key recommendation of the 9/11 Commission, the WMD Commission was charged with assessing current activities, initiatives, and programs of the United States to prevent weapons of mass destruction proliferation and terrorism. The full Commission report and additional views are available at www.preventwmd.gov.

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